

## Unlikely Hero by jackwabbit

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**Summary:** Vignette. Friendship. Dad Hopper. Spoilers: Stranger Things, Season Two. Summary: Hopper needs something. Something very few people in Hawkins can help him with. Good thing he's got a few pinch hitters in his lineup.

# Unlikely Hero

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Rated: PG

Category: Vignette. Friendship. Dad Hopper.

Time Frame: Very Shortly Post-Season Two.

Spoilers: Stranger Things, Season Two.

Summary: Hopper needs something. Something very few people in Hawkins can help him with. Good thing his lineup has a few pinch hitters in it.

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Once again, his timing had been off. According to the clerk, he'd just missed Joyce.

He started to walk slowly to his truck, sighing again and running a hand over his beard.

He must have been the perfect picture of the stress he was feeling, because a voice called out.

"What's wrong?"

Hopper looked up to see Nancy Wheeler looking at him like something under a microscope.

He shook his head.

"Nothing," he mumbled.

Nancy raised one eyebrow at that.

"You expect me to believe that?" she asked.

Hopper sighed yet again. Great. Now even teenage girls were seeing right through him. Was he really that transparent? He decided he didn't want an answer to that, and moved past Nancy to his truck.

"Yes," he muttered, pulling open the door.

Just as he went to get in the vehicle, Nancy's voice made him freeze.

"Did you miss Joyce again?"

Hopper blinked, then turned to face the girl, giving her a look of confusion.

"What?"

Nancy gave him a look of disbelief. "Oh, come on, Chief. You've been here every night for the past three days, and you never buy anything. Better be careful, or people will start to talk."

"Let 'em talk," said Hopper, now glaring at Nancy in annoyance. "Besides, it's not like that."

Nancy smirked. "OK. So, what is it like, then?"

Hopper's eyes grew wide. He was being interrogated by a teenager. His day was getting worse and worse.

"I just needed some stuff, is all."

"But you didn't buy anything," said Nancy. "Again," she added, after a long pause.

Jim narrowed his eyes at Nancy. "How would you know? What are you even doing here, anyway?"

Nancy shrugged and held up a plastic bag. "Radio Shack next door, remember? Working on something with Jonathan."

"Working on what?" asked Hopper, eyes getting more suspicious.

"It's a surprise," said Nancy.

Hopper tensed, but Nancy continued before he could ask what kind of surprise.

"It's for Will. For Christmas. Don't worry. Nothing related to... all that," she said, looking around furtively.

Hopper relaxed, but this was short lived, because Nancy didn't miss a

beat.

"So, now you know what I'm doing here. How about you? If it's not about Joyce, what's it about, then?"

Hopper sighed.

"You're not going to let this go, are you?"

Nancy smiled. "Nope."

"And if I don't tell you, you're going to assume something far worse than the truth, aren't you?"

Nancy smiled wider and shrugged. "Oh, I don't know. I mean, it's pretty easy math, Chief."

Hopper groaned. "I'm not here for Joyce. Well, I mean, I am, but..."

Nancy giggled and Hopper stammered on.

"It's not like that. Really. I just... need some stuff."

Nancy snorted. "I bet."

That stopped Hopper in his tracks. He stared at Nancy with huge eyes. For her part, Nancy stared back, lips pressed together tightly, not quite believing she'd said that. After a moment, Hopper started stammering again.

"I mean... what... you... I just needed... girl stuff," he ended lamely, looking at Nancy with a pleading look and hoping she understood.

She didn't. Nancy's brow furrowed and she stared at Hopper for a long moment before he suddenly inhaled and closed her eyes briefly. Then she nodded slightly and smiled gently at Hopper.

"Girl stuff," she repeated. "For El?"

Hopper nodded slowly.

"Yeah," he said, clearly both relieved and embarrassed.

"Has she?"

"No," said Hopper. "Not yet. Not that I know of. But I figured... you know..."

"You need to be ready."

"Yeah. That."

"And you can't just buy her things because why would you buy that stuff?"

"Exactly."

"So you needed Joyce to ring you up because she knows."

"Now you're getting it."

Nancy nodded. "Makes sense."

"I thought so. I mean... I wish it was different. Maybe Joyce could... you know... but I keep missing her and I worry that..."

Hopper trailed off then, and Nancy picked up the conversation.

"That it'll happen any time."

Hopper nodded.

"She's a smart kid. And I made sure to leave her books on how things work. I've tried to talk to her a few times, too, but I think it'd be better if..."

Now it was Nancy's turn to nod. "Probably, but you're doing fine, Chief. The fact that you've even thought about it says a lot. Now, wait here. I'll be right back."

Nancy turned away from Hopper's truck and started to walk off.

"Where are you going?" Hopper asked.

Nancy looked back over her shoulder and rolled her eyes and suddenly Hopper got it.

He climbed in his truck and waited.

It wasn't long before Nancy climbed into his passenger seat, carrying another plastic bag.

"You ready for this?" she asked.

Hopper laughed. "Not by a long shot. But I was married, you know. It's not my first rodeo."

Nancy gave Hopper a level stare. "It's Eleven."

"Good point," Hopper conceded. "Ain't no rodeo like that."

"Pretty much," said Nancy. "Now, I got a couple of different things."

At that, she dumped her bag out on the seat.

Ten minutes later, Hopper drove off, alone, but well-stocked with panty liners, maxi pads, and tampons.

He also had a promise of "girl talk" and refills any time.

Hopper shook his head and chuckled as he drove.

He loved Joyce's boys, and all their little friends, too. They were great kids.

They were scrappy, too.

He'd take any one of them into a fight. Or even that Harrington kid. Hell, he'd done it before.

But given the choice? When push came to shove? When he really needed a pinch hitter?

If he couldn't have Eleven?

He'd take Nancy Wheeler in a heartbeat.